

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
19 MARCH 2015
7.30 - 8.36 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Finnie, Gbadebo, Mrs McCracken, McLean and Virgo

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Leake, Harrison, Heydon and McCracken
Mr R Briscoe

In Attendance:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
David Cook, Chairman of the Economic and Skills Development Partnership
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Officer

COUNILLOR ANGELL IN THE CHAIR

48. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 29 January 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

The Broadmoor Sirens would remain in place until 2019 when the new hospital was finished. A newspaper article concerning Broadmoor Hospital security and the reply from the Chief Executive of the West London Mental Health NHS Trust to a related letter from Wokingham Borough Council were tabled at the meeting. The article and letter were noted.

49. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing. Councillor Mrs McCracken declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection. There were no indications that Members would be participating under the party whip.

50. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

51. **Public Participation**

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

52. **Economic and Skills Development**

The Commission received an updated from David Cook, Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP) Chairman, and Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive, in respect of the work of the ESDP and progress in implementing the Economic Development Strategy.

The Infrastructure Sub-Group was chaired by a Director at the Transport Research Laboratory and there was a brand new network. Mr Cook was in his fourth year as Chairman of the ESDP and was pleased that the Partnership was now business led. Stakeholders in business wanted to be a part of the Partnership and there was good attendance at meetings. Meetings had been held recently in relation to the variety of organisations in Bracknell and it was thought that Bracknell could be a flagship for business.

The fourth Bracknell Forest Careers Event was held during the year and work was being undertaken with UK Trade and Investment on regeneration and retail. City Deal acted as a broker between education providers and employers and provided a range of advice. Bids had been made through Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership for funding for infrastructure under the Local Growth Fund and delegations had been hosted from China: Hunan province for business growth opportunities and Tianjin regarding opportunities to develop governance and anti-corruption issues.

A keynote event attracting over 60 local companies was hosted by David Cook in October 2014 in relation to how to win contracts. There was a need to access the right labour for small to medium size businesses and this was more likely to be sourced locally. There was more work to be done regarding how to generate enterprise and meetings were being held with businesses in the borough to feed into the Local Economic Framework.

Superfast Broadband was rolling out across the borough, and a better rail service was a priority; there would be two extra carriages on trains from Reading to Waterloo and two extra trains at peak hours according to National Rail's plan. A new business website was being rolled out and the aim was to set up a local business partnership. It was thought that around 70% of the actions arising from the ESDP had been completed but the changes being made were part of a long term journey and work would be undertaken as part of a four year plan.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:

- The Borough Council was talking to and listening to businesses, and the new Business and Enterprise Team under the Assistant Chief Executive had made a difference regarding this. There was work which could be undertaken by the Borough Council which could benefit businesses, for example, in relation to infrastructure.
- The location of head offices had changed dramatically with the advent of new technology to support mobile working and the number of people commuting to work had shrunk; people now wanted smaller more adaptable offices. The Elevate programme would help with guidance for young people as there were

alternatives to university, for example, apprenticeships for practical skills such as engineering.

- When the company Skills Survey was undertaken by Bracknell and Wokingham College people were asked if they would waive their right to anonymity so that actions could be taken in response. There was a mixed economy and a range of sectors in Bracknell. Honda had a training school and some global organisations had more autonomy locally than others. The idea was for Bracknell to act as a business incubator to encourage business interest from countries such as China.
- There was job training or further education colleges for young people who could not afford or did not want to attend university and more to be done in this area for this type of training to be recognised by businesses. Bracknell & Wokingham College were provided with data on what businesses were looking for but there were funding challenges with further education colleges.
- Campbell Christie, Bracknell and Wokingham College, had been tasked with engaging with schools in the borough, and a representative from secondary schools was needed to help with this work. The aim was to make business exciting and motivating to engage the creativity of young people.
- It was a national issue that there was a mismatch between education provision and what businesses were looking for in terms of skills, knowledge and work ethics. It was possible to have local initiatives to address this issue but young people needed role models such as teachers or parents. Training in companies sometimes involved young people becoming school governors to learn public sector life and stakeholder management. The Enterprise Group were looking at addressing the gap.

53. Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs) 2014/15

The Commission noted the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Reports for the third quarter of 2014/15 (October to December) relating to the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department.

54. Corporate Performance Overview Report

The Commission considered the Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report for the third quarter of 2014/15 (October to December).

55. Executive Forward Plan

The Commission noted the forthcoming Key and Non-Key Decisions of a corporate nature.

56. Work Programme and Panel Activity Update

The Commission noted the progress by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the Overview and Scrutiny Panels against the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2014-15.

Commission members took the opportunity to thank the Overview and Scrutiny team for their work and support. The Chairman thanked everyone for taking part in the work of the Commission.

CHAIRMAN